(a) the impact of drought on the Rabi sowing in various States; and

(b) the details of plans made by Government to ensure that the drought does not affect Rabi sowing adversely?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Overall good late rains at the end of Kharif season at most places has improved the soil moisture making the soil conducive for Rabi sowing. Hence, barring States like Gujarat and Rajasthan there is no major overall impact of drought on Rabi as such. However, Government has taken several steps to tackle the impending situation for increasing the area under Rabi cultivation to compensate losses of kharif 2009-10. Sowing of Rabi crops is in progress in the all states in the country. The area coverage of wheat, Rabi rice, coarse cereals, pulses and oilseeds as on 10.12.2009 reported as follows:

	Area: in lakh hectares	
Name of Crop	2009	2008
Wheat	217.02	216.02
Rabi Rice	3.36	2.11
Coarse Cereals	57.29	61.08
Total Pulses	111.90	109.39
Total Oilseeds	77.77	83.80

Some area of oilseeds is diverted to pluses in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The less coverage under Coarse Cereals has been reported in the states of Karnataka due to area diverted to pulses and oilseeds.

State Government have been given flexibility to utilize the funds under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes namely National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Integrated Cereals Development Programme (ICDP) under Macro Management and Integrated Scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oilpalm and Maize (ISOPOM) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RVKY) funds for Agricultural Development programme. Age limit norms of certified seed of wheat, rice and pulses varieties have been relaxed. Seed subsidy has been increased for wheat and rice crop from Rs.500 /- to Rs. 700/- per quintal, for pulses from Rs. 1200 to Rs.2000/- per quintal and Jowar and Bajra from Rs.800 to Rs.1000/- per quintal for Rabi 2009-10 season. Additional allocations of rust-resistant and terminal heat-tolerant wheat varieties of minikit have been made available. Availability and supply of essential inputs such as fertilizers, additional power for irrigation etc. have been provided in coordination with the States and concerned Central Ministries.

Investment for transgenic research

3260. SHRI RAJNITI PRASAD: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether National Action Plan on Climatic Change (NAPCC) Mission on Agriculture is proposing huge financial investment for transgenic research claiming to be the solution for climatic crisis;

(b) whether it is opposed by farmers and civil society groups;

(c) whether Government has received large number of representations from various sections of society and eminent scientists urging for moratorium on GM foods; and

(d) if so, the action being taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) A National Action Plan on Climate Change was released by Prime Minister in June 2008 which envisages a National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture amongst its 8 National Missions. The National Mission aims at developing strategies to make Indian Agriculture more resilient to climate change through development of new varieties of thermal resistant crops, new credit and insurance mechanisms, better access to information and use of biotechnology.

Mission on Agriculture is proposing greater focus on dryland agriculture, risk management, access to information and use of biotechnology. The priority areas in biotechnology include use of genetic engineering to convert C3 crops to C4 systems for higher productivity at higher level of carbon dioxide, development of crops with better water and land use efficiency, development of nutritional strategies for managing heat stress in dairy animals.

(b) to (d) Different views and representations when received are dealt with appropriately on merits.

Investment in agriculture

†3261. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is working on a scheme for encouraging investment in agriculture sector;

(b) whether it is also a fact that price of sugar is high in Indian markets;

(c) if so, whether Government is taking measures to control the hike in its prices and also assessing the effect of foreign investment in agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir. Sugar prices in Indian markets this year are higher than prices prevailing last year.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The steps taken by the Government to control prices are indicated in given Statement (*See* below). FDI in agriculture is allowed upto 100% under the automatic route in

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.